

THE WRITINGS OF
FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE



An Oration Delivered by

MRS. LUCY SEYMER, M.A., S.R.N.

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Florence Nightingale Oration No. 2

INTRODUCTION

AS a memorial to Florence Nightingale, the International Council of Nurses some years ago decided that at each International Congress of Nurses an Oration covering some aspect of the life and work of Florence Nightingale should be given, so as to keep her great contribution to nursing before the nurses of the world.

On the occasion of the IXth Congress held in Atlantic City, U.S.A., in 1947 the Oration was given by Mrs. Lucy Seymer on "The Writings of Florence Nightingale." More than six thousand nurses from forty different countries who were privileged to hear this Oration were deeply impressed with the material presented in such a scholarly manner.

Mrs. Seymer is an M.A. of the University of Oxford and a student of history. She trained as a nurse at the Nightingale Training School, St. Thomas's Hospital, London, and is the author of the well-known book, *A General History of Nursing*. She therefore speaks with authority on the subject.

To any student of nursing history the subject of this Oration is of intense interest. It gives in concise form an appreciation of Miss Nightingale's literary contribution to nursing and allied subjects. Many of the quotations selected are taken from writings the texts of which are difficult to find and these quotations give illuminating evidence of an original mind which has hitherto not been fully appreciated.

In view of the historical interest of the subject, it was considered by the Florence Nightingale International Foundation that schools of nursing would wish to have copies of this in their libraries and that many nurses would like to possess copies of their own. Therefore the consent of the International Council of Nurses and of Mrs. Seymer was obtained so that the Oration might be made available to the nursing profession in booklet form to be sold for the benefit of the Florence Nightingale International Foundation.

I should like to express, on behalf of the Florence Nightingale International Foundation, my thanks to Mrs. Seymer and to the International Council of Nurses for permission to print the text. I am glad also to take this opportunity of thanking the NURSING MIRROR of England for so generously donating the copies for sale.

MARY I. LAMBIE

President

Florence Nightingale International Foundation.

date ?



FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

From a photograph in possession of the NURSING MIRROR, England

THE WRITINGS OF FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

I HAVE chosen the writings of Florence Nightingale as the subject of my speech to-night, because I feel it is one which has been shamefully neglected and its full significance underestimated. This neglect is partly understandable, since many of Florence Nightingale's works are difficult to obtain. Yet nowhere does she reveal herself more completely than in her writings. The Florence Nightingale International Foundation has justly recognised their importance. Is proposing to compile a catalogue of everything connected with her, including all that she wrote. This catalogue will be available at the projected Headquarters of the Foundation to facilitate the research of future students. At present, Florence Nightingale's writings are equalled in scope and variety only by their inaccessibility. Many lie buried in British Government publications; others appear in the Proceedings of bygone Congresses. Others were contributed, fifty or more years ago, to different periodicals, some of which are not now current. Some day, one hopes, the Foundation may be instrumental in reprinting those works which most faithfully illustrate her character, those which do not "date," but are eternally true. For what is the position now? Have most nurses any knowledge of her important contributions to Government Reports, or any conception that she wrote about philosophy—or about India? Because Florence Nightingale's literary work deserves closer study than it has yet received, I am attempting this brief survey.

It was a fashion among some biographers of the 1920s to "debunk" their eminent Victorian forefathers. Nobody as serious-minded and as fearless as Florence Nightingale could hope altogether to escape this form of detraction. Yet the first thing that emerges from a study of her writings is that she was herself an eminent "debunker"! Her criticisms of the follies and inefficiencies of the so-called systems which confronted her are positively devastating. But, trenchant as she was, she was never scurrilous or personal. As she herself said:—

It would be as useless as injudicious to select individual instances or persons as the objects of animadversion. The system which placed them where they were is the point to be considered.⁽¹⁾

This quotation comes from *Notes on matters affecting the Health, Efficiency and Hospital Administration of the British Army* which Sir Edward Cook, her biographer, has justly called the "least known but most remarkable of her works." This is the greatest written indictment of the ignorance, stupidity and apathy Florence Nightingale found in high quarters, especially in the military hierarchy. It minutely examines the true causes of the unnecessary sufferings of the Crimean Army, and discusses how to avoid their recurrence. It forms an amplification of her important contributions to the official Report of the Royal Commission of 1857.

To those unfamiliar with British Government procedure let me here explain that a Royal Commission is a Committee of disinterested persons chosen by the Crown to undertake an enquiry into some particular question. Their "terms of reference" are minutely stated and the results of their enquiries embodied in a Report, presented to the Crown and published as an official document.

But Florence Nightingale's struggles against the War Office did not end with the Crimean War. In 1858 she wrote as follows in an unsigned article about the scheme for building an Army hospital at Netley, near Southampton, on a site declared quite unsuitable by one Commission, but later approved by another:

Like all other War Office proceedings, the project in question had to begin from below, and to work its way up to the top—commencing with the now happily defunct Army Medical Department, and receiving there that mark of incapacity which it is likely to carry on its forehead in all time to come.

When a Minister asks for excuses, we may be very sure they will be found. Indeed it is wonderful what may be done in this line. For £1,000 of public money . . . a Minister may have on very short notice 200 pages of excuses. We are reminded of the grain of mustard seed, which indeed is the least of all seeds, but it becomes a great tree and birds live in its branches. The excuse upon which Netley could be continued was the least of all excuses, but £70,000 have been lodged in its branches and voted by the House of Commons this year.⁽²⁾

This passage provides an admirable illustration of Florence Nightingale's style, about which a word must be said, diffidently, in any speech which purports to treat of her writings. Its most marked characteristic is perhaps its extreme lucidity: the meaning of any passage is at once clear to even the most hurried reader. But being clear is often synonymous with being dull—and her worst enemy could never accuse Florence Nightingale of dullness! To everything she wrote, even to

her driest and most factual productions, she contrived to give a twist of her own. There is a characteristic tang, often a sarcastic one, in her phrases, that makes them stick in the memory and a keen sense of humour permeates all her strictures.

Her style varied, obviously, with the public she was addressing. Her "official" writings are clear and unemotional, though here and there she cannot resist indulging in a sly dig. For instance, in a Government report she says:—

It is added 900 men . . . are generally accommodated in the barrack without inconvenient overcrowding. What is *convenient* overcrowding?⁽³⁾

or again:—

In another (hospital) the privy is said to be a disgrace to the 19th century. One wonders to what century it would be a credit.⁽⁴⁾

Her writings make it clear, I think, that to Florence Nightingale the sin against the Holy Ghost was *humbug*: the verbal or factual insincerity that is unsupported in the one case by proof and in the other by action. To sham she was merciless: she was almost as impatient of muddled thinking, and she abhorred sentimentality. One senses her indignation under, or perhaps because of, the quiet and impersonal tenour of the great bulk of her writings. And above all these things, at every turn one is struck by her breath-taking modernity.

Her works on nursing were for a wider public, so she adopts a more popular vein replete with her own brand of caustic humour. Take this definition of a nurse:—

No one ever gives any other definition of what a nurse should be than this: "devoted and obedient." This definition would do just as well for a porter. It might even do for a horse. It would not do for a policeman. Consider how many women there are who have nothing to devote—neither intelligence, nor eyes, nor ears, nor hands.⁽⁵⁾

or again this succinct criticism:—

Merely looking at the sick is not observing. To look is not always to see.⁽⁶⁾

or again the rather cynical passage wherein some women's motives for nursing are exposed:—

It seems a commonly received idea among men and even among women themselves that it requires nothing but a disappointment in love, the want of an object, a general disgust, or incapacity for other things to turn a woman into a good nurse.⁽⁷⁾

(Now did I not say she was a debunker?) Her works on India are rather different in treatment and to the layman appear overburdened with facts and figures. But this is unavoidable when expounding any complicated subject.

A question which must be answered at this point is:—Was Florence Nightingale a *great* writer? I believe she herself would have deprecated any such title. Can we find a key to her attitude to writing in a letter where she confesses that she “had much rather live than write”? In the face of this statement I feel that she experienced little of the creative satisfaction of authorship *as such* and that she wrote because she must.

Now why did she have to write? At the end of the Crimean War her position was unique and her influence was unparalleled. This influence she felt she must use to the full limit of her powers. As she forcibly put it: “I stand at the altar of the murdered men, and while I live I fight their cause.” She would no doubt have preferred to give active, personal work to the Royal Commission, but 90 years ago it would have seemed almost immodest for a woman to be a member, and her prolonged ill-health would have prevented it. At the present day, what would she have done to further her causes? I cannot doubt that she would have enlisted the support of the popular press, spoken at public meetings—and stood before a microphone. But in 1857 such methods were denied her. Consequently, to reach that public she desired to influence, to achieve those reforms she had at heart, to publicise those unpalatable facts she knew would be forgotten if not continually kept before the nation’s conscience, she had, perforce, to turn to the printed word. The only works, possibly, that she composed for the pleasure in writing them were her philosophic and religious books. In these we see the speculations of a brilliant mind intent on elucidating its own difficulties, rather than the clarion call of the reformer, dipping her pen, if necessary, in vitriol to champion those causes to which she had dedicated her life.

When one first tries to analyse the corpus of Florence Nightingale’s writings, the versatility of the authoress is almost as overwhelming as the sheer amount. Anyone attempting such an analysis must of course use as a basis Sir Edward Cook’s detailed Bibliography which runs to no fewer than 147 separate entries. Also a striking peculiarity of her writings must be emphasised. I have already said that much was contributed to official publications. Another important portion was never “published” in the ordinary meaning of the term, but privately printed, often in very small numbers. For example, of the book I mentioned, *Notes affecting the health, etc., of the British Army*, only 500 copies were printed, which were not sold but presented to influential people. To these two facts one can in great measure attribute the difficulty the ordinary reader experiences in obtaining Florence Nightingale’s writings from the ordinary library. It will perhaps always remain a problem why Florence Nightingale did not wish her writings

to be more widely read. I think one solution may lie in her consistent shrinking from *personal* publicity. We must also not forget that 90 years ago, almost all important Government decisions rested (despite democratic institutions) in the hands of a very small group. To this group many of Florence Nightingale’s most intimate friends belonged and into their hands she placed her books. In a word, she wrote for her causes, not for the public.

This complex mass of writings I shall divide, roughly, into four groups:

- I. Her contributions to the Reports of the Royal Commissions after the Crimean War.
- II. Her writings on nursing and hospitals, including her letters to the Nightingale School.
- III. Her philosophic and religious writings.
- IV. Her works on India.

In addition she wrote innumerable letters, but most of them are still unpublished. I shall speak about each group, but must mention an early book in passing. This is her *Letters from Egypt* written in 1849-1850 and privately printed. Though a slight work, these letters make delightful reading and proclaim her the ideal travelling companion. It is also thoroughly characteristic that what she seems most to have enjoyed were visits in Alexandria to the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, whose work she minutely describes with obvious admiration.

Section I: Contributions to Reports of Royal Commissions

The earliest group of Florence Nightingale’s writings was the direct outcome of her work in the Crimea. Two Royal Commissions were appointed, in 1855 and 1857, to investigate the Crimean muddle. In fact one may fairly state that without Florence Nightingale’s private letters, written from Scutari itself to Sidney Herbert (then Minister at War) they might never have been appointed. In the official Reports the detailed evidence she gave to these two Commissions is printed in full. In addition she prepared, at the request of Lord Panmure, the Secretary of State for War, two Supplementary Reports. The first is the book already mentioned, *Notes on matters affecting the Health, etc., of the British Army*, the other a complementary volume called *Subsidiary Notes as to the introduction of female nursing into military hospitals in peace and war*. Neither of these books was ever, as I said, issued to the public. In the official Report of 1857 she replied to a great variety of written questions, such as:—

Will you state your opinion as to the best manner of organising a general hospital so as to make such hospitals thoroughly efficient?⁽⁹⁾

Questions such as these gave Florence Nightingale the opportunity for which she had no doubt longed. Her masterly answers enunciate the essentials underlying all efficient hospital organisation. To us these Reports are important for quite other reasons. First, they established Florence Nightingale as THE authority on all matters concerned with hospitals, hygiene and nursing. Secondly, they showed that she was a convinced sanitarian and also, what someone has termed a "passionate statistician." Her facts proved up to the hilt that the consistent violation of every sanitary law had been more responsible for the Crimean *débâcle* than even the breakdown of the medical services. To illustrate the statistical tables she inserted diagrams or graphs, saying:—

Diagrams are of great utility for illustrating certain questions of vital statistics by conveying ideas on the subject through the eye which cannot be so readily grasped when contained in figures.⁽⁹⁾

To-day we accept graphs as a commonplace, but in 1857 they were quite an innovation. She must have desired that her share in this Report should be more widely known for she reprinted both the questions and her answers in 1859 in *Notes on Hospitals*. It is noteworthy that Florence Nightingale had not only elaborated every detail of how any Army Medical Department ought in future to be organised, but also defined the proper regulation of the nursing. She says of Army nurses:—

With regard to the female nurses . . . my own opinion is humbly but entirely against employing any but women of the efficiency, responsibility and character of head nurses in civil hospitals.⁽¹⁰⁾

1857 Section II: Writings on Nursing and Hospitals

The first of Florence Nightingale's books on nursing and hospitals is the small, anonymous pamphlet written about the Deaconess establishment at Kaiserswerth after her visit in 1851. It is memorable as being the first thing she ever printed. In 1859 *Notes on Nursing* came out. This is, curiously enough, her only book on nursing pure and simple. It appeared in December, 1859, a modest black volume of only 77 pages. The fame of its authoress made it in modern parlance a "best seller." 15,000 copies sold within a month of publication, an almost unheard-of figure in those days, and all the more remarkable as it cost five shillings, or over a dollar, representing about three times this amount at present-day values. Ever since then it has been the most widely circulated of her books. And what is this notable little

book about? It is not too much to say that its publication was a bombshell. Here was the most famous nurse introducing a new calling—the great profession of nursing to which we all belong—and enunciating its principles for the first time! What an eye-opener to her contemporaries, accustomed to "Sairey Gamps," must have been this definition of the *trained nurse*—written later but doubtless representing her views at all times:

The nurse must have method, self-sacrifice, watchful activity, love of the work, devotion to duty (that is the service of the good), the courage, the coolness of the soldier, the tenderness of the mother, the absence of the prig (that is never thinking that she has attained perfection or that there is nothing better). She must have a three-fold interest in her work—an intellectual interest in the case, a (much higher) hearty interest in the patient, a technical (practical) interest in the patient's care and cure. She must not look upon patients as made for nurses, but upon nurses as made for patients.⁽¹¹⁾

Notes on Nursing is not a textbook as we understand this term. The authoress specifically states in the Preface:

The following notes are by no means intended as a rule of thought by which nurses can teach themselves to nurse, still less as a manual to teach nurses to nurse.⁽¹²⁾

Consequently we shall scan its pages in vain for practical instructions, yet nowhere find better expressed the fundamental principles of good nursing, or learn how closely it is linked with sanitary laws, with hygiene and, above all, with common sense! In the next year, 1860, Florence Nightingale enlarged and rewrote it. It was published this same year in New York and translated into Italian, German and French. The French edition—a proof of its importance—contained a note from the famous statesman Monsieur Guizot and a preface by the medical historian Dr. C. Daremberg. In 1861 a cheap popular edition followed, called *Notes on Nursing for the Labouring Classes*. It is a slightly abridged form of the 1860 edition, with an added chapter addressed to girls called "Minding Baby." This chapter is almost the simplest and most delightful thing Florence Nightingale ever wrote—nor could any modern paediatrician improve upon her short summing-up of what every baby needs:

Now, can you remember the things you have to mind for baby? There is:

- (1) Fresh air.
- (2) Proper warmth.
- (3) Cleanliness for its little body, its clothes, its bed, its room and house.
- (4) Feeding it with proper food, at regular times.
- (5) Not startling it or shaking its little body or its little nerves.
- (6) Light and cheerfulness.

- (7) Proper clothes, in bed and up.
And *management* in all these things.⁽¹³⁾

Later she expressed much the same ideas in these words:

No child can be well who is not bright and merry and brought up in fresh air and sunshine and surrounded by love—the sunshine of the soul.⁽¹⁴⁾

If *Notes on Nursing* shows us what Florence Nightingale thought about the relationship between nurse and patient, other writings discuss that between nurse and training school. However, before formulating her opinions on this vital matter, she laid down her views on the correct planning and equipment of hospitals. Although we may not now agree with every detail of her views, no one would dispute her contention—that no proper nursing can be done in an improperly planned building. She herself tersely states:

A good nursing staff will perform their duties, more or less satisfactorily, under every disadvantage. But while doing so, their head will always try to improve their surroundings in such a way as to liberate them from subsidiary work and to enable them to devote their time more exclusively to the care of the sick. This is, after all, the real purpose of their being there at all, not to act as lifts, water carriers, beasts of burden or steam engines—articles whose labour can be had at vastly less cost than that of educated human beings.⁽¹⁵⁾

In 1865 Florence Nightingale contributed to two books on district, or visiting, nursing. She was always deeply interested in it, and later wrote an eloquent appeal for its extension in London. But it is in 1867, when preparing a Report on providing trained nurses for Workhouse Infirmaries (the English term for hospitals for the destitute sick) that we first get her system of nurse-training defined. The idea of introducing such training into these hospitals was an innovation, since up till then the so-called nurses had been taken from among the illiterate pauper inmates. Her eloquent plea for replacing these unsuitable women by trained nurses was:

Are we to expect that we shall find suitable women for an occupation which requires, perhaps above every other occupation, sobriety, honesty, trustworthiness, truthfulness, orderliness, cleanliness, good character and good health, among those who, nearly all, at least in the workhouses of large towns, are there because they have *not* been sober, *not* been honest, *not* been trustworthy or truthful, *not* been orderly or cleanly, *not* had good character or good health?⁽¹⁶⁾

A year or so later we get one of her few written allusions to war nursing. A letter of hers was read at the inaugural meeting in 1870 of what afterwards became the British Red Cross Society. In it she bluntly warns all would-be volunteers that nurses in war hospitals must be "real lovers of hard work." It is sometimes erroneously supposed that Florence Nightingale was instrumental in founding the Red Cross;

in fact she was never closely connected with it or had any share in organising its development.

In 1871 she wrote a remarkable book on a subject allied to nursing, called *Introductory Notes on Lying-in Institutions*. The reason for writing it was that the Nightingale School for Midwives at King's College Hospital had been forced to close, after only five years, owing to puerperal fever. It is a detailed examination of all the statistics the authoress could assemble on maternal mortality, and its outlook is astonishingly modern. She pleads, characteristically, for a better *system* of statistics and says they show "a large amount of preventible mortality," adding this significant sentence:

Lying-in is neither a disease nor an accident, and any fatality attending it is not to be counted as so much *per cent* of inevitable loss. On the contrary, a death in childbed is almost a subject for an inquest. It is nothing short of a calamity, which it is right we should know all about, to avoid it in future.⁽¹⁷⁾

Ten years later Florence Nightingale contributed two detailed articles to *Quain's Dictionary of Medicine* which represent, I feel, the high-water mark of what she wrote about nursing. One might almost term them her credo. Nowhere else can we find such a thoughtful exposition of all that she felt about the right aims for nurses and the right methods of training them to achieve these aims. She defines training thus:

Training is to teach a nurse to know her business, that is, to observe exactly, to do, to tell exactly, in such stupendous issues as life and death, health and disease. Training is to enable the nurse to act for the best in carrying out her orders, not as a machine but as a nurse. . . . Training has to make her not servile, but loyal to medical orders and authorities. True loyalty to orders cannot be without the independent sense or energy of responsibility which alone secures real trustworthiness.⁽¹⁸⁾

For a good training she says the six essentials are:—

- (1) A year's practical training.
- (2) Clinical lectures from the hospital professor.
- (3) Classes for a competent mistress to drill the professorial teaching into the probationers' minds.
- (4) Authority and discipline of a trained superintendent.
- (5) Organisation to give training systematically.
- (6) Accommodation for sleeping, classes and meals.⁽¹⁹⁾

After smiling at the idea of one year's training being sufficient, is it not rather humiliating that what we may think such a modern form of instruction, namely, "case study," was anticipated by Florence Nightingale in what she terms "careful notes"? She states that one of the probationers' duties is:—

To take careful notes of cases. A case-paper should be regularly kept by every probationer of cases selected by the medical instructor.

The case-paper to have printed headings such as Temperature, Pulse, Respiration, Sleep, Nourishment, etc., and other such heads—preceded by a real medical history of the case. . . . This is followed by remarks on the termination of the case. These case-papers should be rigorously overhauled by the ward-sisters and the class-mistress, as well as by the medical instructor, who should also at his own hospital beds check the case-taking.⁽²⁰⁾

Her insistence on the supreme authority of the Superintendent is frequently expressed. For example, she says:—

There is no case on record where the Training School has been worth anything, except where the Superintendent, by whatever name she is called, herself lives in a Hospital, trains in the Hospital, makes that training her chief care, and is herself the head of the nursing in the Hospital.⁽²¹⁾

She expresses this same idea in another connection in these words:—

No good ever comes of anyone ever interfering between the head of the nursing establishment and her nurses. . . . In disciplinary matters a woman can only understand a woman.⁽²²⁾

It would seem that by the 1890s, even Florence Nightingale might have reached the end of what she meant to write about nursing. But no, her fertile mind was turning to another aspect of the nursing problem. She now outlined a scheme for bringing the benefits of improved sanitary knowledge and trained nursing right into the homes of the people—an extension, as she envisaged it, of the work of her beloved District Nurses. In a short pamphlet she propounded the proposed organisation of what she called “health teaching” by “health missionaries”—the prototype of the British “Health Visitor” of today. The idea of these “health missionaries” is only another proof of Florence Nightingale’s outstanding genius in that she always rated prevention higher than cure: an attitude which placed her far ahead of her contemporaries.

Section III : Philosophic and Religious Writings

Of Florence Nightingale’s writings on religion and philosophy, it is difficult to formulate any definite judgment since they are so few. The three volumes entitled *Suggestions for Thought to the Searchers after Truth among the Artisans of England*, is the most important, yet even this book has come down to us in a tentative, not a finished form and was, we know, composed over a period of years. It suffers from not having been revised and there are many repetitions. Had Florence Nightingale ever published this book—for only 150 copies were printed for intimate friends—she would no doubt have cut and improved it, but being so unfinished it is unfair to criticise it. Yet the desire to evolve

some working religious philosophy remained with her. This is proved by two articles written in 1873 called *A Note of Interrogation* and *A Sub-note of Interrogation; what will our religion be in 1999?* In these she deals with much the same topics as in the *Suggestions*, what she expressed as

An enquiry into the plan upon which mankind is created, or, in other words, into the character of the Power who planned it.⁽²³⁾

Yet even in these articles we find no conclusive solutions to the many problems set forth in them. Was this because to a person like Florence Nightingale it was impossible to commit solutions to writing unless she had first convinced herself that they were correct? That she felt the whole subject had been insufficiently studied is proved by another passage

But it never seems to be thought that it is more difficult to discover the ways of creating the Kingdom of Heaven on earth than to discover the ways of the Solar System. Yet no one would ever think of recommending the study of Astronomy to be pursued in the weak, pretentious, sententious manner that we are preached to about pursuing Life. Yet Life is a harder study than Astronomy if we are really to succeed in it, really to succeed in bringing about a little corner of the Kingdom of Heaven.⁽²⁴⁾

It may be a matter of regret that Florence Nightingale did not pursue these topics further. Presumably lack of time, and not lack of interest, influenced her to devote her energies to other subjects.

Section IV : Works on India

That absorbing and important branch of Florence Nightingale’s literary work, her writings on India, followed in logical sequence on her work about Army sanitation. In 1859 yet another Royal Commission was appointed to enquire into the sanitary state of the British Army in India. Florence Nightingale’s help was automatically enlisted and her observations embodied in the Report published in 1863. Thus began an interest in Indian affairs which lasted all her life. A large proportion of her Bibliography consists of the things she wrote on every kind of Indian problem. In all of them she writes as the sanitary expert rather than the nurse, except in a Report called *Suggestions on a System of nursing for hospitals in India*. It is no exaggeration to say that this whole collection of Indian writings is a *tour de force*. From her sofa in London Florence Nightingale set out to make herself a recognised expert on India—without ever setting foot on its soil! How did she achieve this position? By painstaking study of every available official publication on India and by personal contact with successive Viceroys,

with high English officials and with Indian experts. No one with a less strong sense of responsibility would have set herself such a stupendous task: no one with a less keen and disciplined mind could have accomplished it. She sums up what she felt in a letter of 1870 to an Indian official.

For eleven years past, what little I could do for India, for the conditions on which the Eternal has made to depend the lives and health and social happiness of men, as well Native as European, has been the constant object of my thoughts.⁽²⁵⁾

It would be impossible in the short time we have together, to treat adequately of this great mass of Indian writings. But a few of the titles of her articles will give some idea of their wide range. In 1863 she published a paper called *How men may live and not die in India*. In 1870 she is writing on *Indian sanitation*, in 1883 on *The Bengal Tenancy Bill* and as late as 1893 on *Health Lectures for Indian Villages*. Although these articles may at first glance seem unconnected, yet all teach the same lesson, namely:—that no Government could expect to see the Indian people improve in health or prosperity unless it first provided basic sanitary needs such as adequate irrigation, pure water and proper sanitation. The whole Indian question was very near Florence Nightingale's heart and she regarded it as some of her best work. This is proved by her directing in her first Will (afterwards revoked) that all her papers should be destroyed with the exception of those on India. Can we hope that some day one of our Indian colleagues will give us a careful study of this extremely significant section of her literary work?

And now, in summing up, let us consider wherein a study of Florence Nightingale's writings can help us. In the first place it can furnish a truer appreciation of her personality and achievements. In the second place it gives us an insight into the broad sweep of her interests, which ranged from specific nursing problems to the building of hospitals, from the construction of sanitary barracks in India to the correct presentation of vital statistics. In the third place, by far the most important, it gives us a spiritual refresher course in those things which, allowing for differences of date and country, we all know to be fundamental. What matter if Florence Nightingale warns us against the dangers of the crinolines we no longer wear—are not her definitions of the finer minutiae of good nursing as true, and as easily overlooked, in 1947 as in 1859? And is not this *everyone's* ideal of a nurse?—

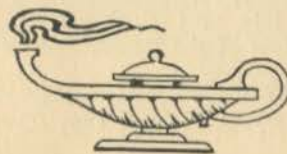
A really good nurse must needs be of the highest class of character. It need hardly be said that she must be

- (1) Chaste, in the sense of the Sermon on the Mount. A good nurse should be the Sermon on the Mount in herself. . . .
- (2) Sober in spirit as well as in drink, and temperate in all things.

- (3) Honest—not accepting the most trifling fee or bribe from patients or friends.
- (4) Truthful—and to be able to tell the truth includes attention and observation, to observe truly—memory to remember truly—power of expression to tell truly what one has observed truly. . . .
- (5) Trustworthy, to carry out directions intelligently and perfectly, unseen as well as seen, to the Lord as well as unto men—no mere eye-service.
- (6) Punctual to a second and orderly to a hair. . . .
- (7) Quiet yet quick: quick without hurry; gentle without slowness, discreet without self-importance; no gossip.
- (8) Cheerful, hopeful, not allowing herself to be discouraged by unfavourable symptoms. . . .
- (9) Cleanly to the point of exquisiteness both for the patient's sake and her own.
- (10) Thinking of her patient and not of herself. . . . The nurse must have simplicity and a single eye to the patient's good. . . . The nurse must always be kind, but never emotional. The patient must find a real, not a forced or "put on" centre of calmness in his nurse. . . . Half the battle of nursing is to relieve your sick from having to think for themselves at all—least of all for their own nursing.⁽²⁶⁾

As a graduate of her School it seems appropriate that I should bring this Oration to a close with this prophetic and inspiring utterance of our Foundress read in Chicago some fifty years ago.

We are only on the threshold of nursing. In the future, which I shall not see, for I am old, may a better way be opened. May the methods by which *every* infant, *every* human being, will have the best chance of health—the methods by which *every* sick person will have the best chance of recovery, be learned and practised! . . . May we hope that when *we* are all dead and gone, leaders will arise who have been personally experienced in the hard and practical work, the difficulties and the joys of organising nursing reforms, and who will lead far beyond anything we have done. High hopes which will not be deceived.⁽²⁷⁾



REFERENCES

References to quotations from Florence Nightingale's writings in the text. The numbers in parentheses refer to those of the Bibliography by Sir Edward Cook. *Life of Florence Nightingale* (1913), Vol. II, Appendix A, *A List of Writings by Miss Nightingale*.

- (1) *Notes on matters affecting the Health, Efficiency and Hospital Administration of the British Army founded chiefly on the experience of the late war*, p. 65 (Cook 8).
- (2) *Saturday Review*, August 28, 1858 (Cook 10).
- (3) *Report of the Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of the Army in India, 1863*, Vol. II, p. 353.
- (4) *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 361.
- (5) *Notes on Nursing*, 1860 edition, p. 200 (Cook 17).
- (6) Article in Quain's *Dictionary of Medicine*, 1882 (Cook 106).
- (7) *Notes on Nursing*, 1860 edition, p. 192 (Cook 17).
- (8) *Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into Regulations affecting the Sanitary Condition of the Army, the Organisation of military hospitals and the treatment of the sick and wounded*, 1857 (Cook 7).
- (9) *Mortality of the British Army at home and abroad and during the Russian War as compared with the mortality of the civil population in England*. Illustrated by Tables and Diagrams, p. 1 (Cook 13).
- (10) *Report*, 1857, p. 383; as above Reference No. 8 (Cook 7).
- (11) *Sick-nursing and health-nursing*. Paper in *Woman's Mission* read at Chicago, 1893 (Cook 131).
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- (23) *Frazer's Magazine*, May, 1873 (Cook 64).
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